



CHARITABLE HEALTHCARE NETWORK

Ohio: Stronger. Healthier. Together.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL PHARMACIST RECOGNIZED AS 2020 FREE CLINIC PHARMACIST OF THE YEAR AT OHIO FREE CLINIC APPRECIATION AWARDS

Columbus, OH -12/9/2020 – Saint Vincent de Paul Cincinnati Charitable Pharmacy (SVDP), along with free clinics across Ohio, is celebrating the Sixth Annual Free Clinic Appreciation Month. With the passage of House Bill 320 in 2014, the Ohio Legislature designated December as Free Clinic Appreciation Month. On Wednesday's virtual celebration, Mike Espel, RPh, was recognized as Ohio's 2020 Free Clinic Pharmacist of the Year.

"Our clinic fills a critical need for medication access, particularly for hard-working Southern Ohioans who've struggled maintaining access to life-saving prescription drugs," said Rusty Curington. "Free Clinic Appreciation Month gives us a chance to celebrate all that we've accomplished, and how we've risen to the challenge during COVID-19."

In 2019, Ohio's free clinics provided more than 150,000 visits to over 55,000 patients, with volunteer physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals providing nearly 180,000 hours of care to those who have fallen through the cracks of our healthcare system in Ohio. Ohio's free clinics are on track to obtain similar service hours even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, 31 of Charitable Healthcare Network's 52 clinics remained open to provide medical services in a time when their communities needed them most. SVDP Cincinnati was able to expand and adapt their services to continue serving their local community while upholding the safety of their staff and patients.

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“While the ACA and Medicaid Expansion has helped thousands of Ohioans obtain health insurance, gaps still remain,” said Deb Miller, Executive Director of the Charitable Healthcare Network. “The pandemic has made the need for our clinics stronger than ever as unemployment and uninsured rates remain high. We are especially excited for the opportunity in 2020 to recognize the work Ohio’s clinics are doing to address those gaps.”

To learn more about Ohio Free Clinic Appreciation Month, please contact Sydney Hatch (shatch@charitablehealth.org), visit our website www.charitablehealth.org or follow us on Twitter [@CHNetwork](https://twitter.com/CHNetwork), use #ohiofreeclinics and #OhioStrongerHealthierTogether

To share our social media posts about Mike, follow these links to our Twitter and Facebook.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CHNetwork/status/1336324661098000384?s=20>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CharitableHealthcareNetwork/posts/4188982161136059>



About Mike Espel, RPh, from Saint Vincent de Paul Cincinnati Charitable Pharmacy.

For the past 46 years, Mike Espel has provided pharmaceutical care to the underserved of Southwest Ohio. After graduating from the University of Cincinnati College of Pharmacy in 1974, Mike served as a pharmacist and eventual Pharmacy Director for the Cincinnati Health Department for 32 years. In 2006, he became the founding Pharmacy Director of St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy in Cincinnati, dedicated to providing free prescription medications to Ohioans in critical need. Under his leadership, the Charitable Pharmacy has dispensed over 576,000 prescriptions valued at \$75 million at no charge, innovated clinical programs that improve health outcomes and prevent healthcare costs, and trained over 500 pharmacists to provide underserved, outcomes-based pharmaceutical care. In Spring 2021, Mike plans to celebrate his retirement by continuing to serve his neighbors in need as a volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy.

About Charitable Healthcare Network.

Charitable Healthcare Network (CHN), formerly the Ohio Association of Free Clinics, advocates on behalf of Ohio’s free clinics and the people they serve. We do not provide direct health care services on-site, but support those clinics that do. Free clinic services vary, but may include: primary care, prescription assistance, dental, vision, behavioral health and other specialties. With the recent impacts of COVID-19, the number of unemployed and uninsured/under-insured citizens is skyrocketing like never before. Using cost-effective strategies, such as in-kind services, building partnerships with other nonprofit organizations and donations of health care resources and time, we are able to support free clinics so they can provide for the health care needs of their patients. These strategies mean that every dollar invested in free clinics brings nearly \$6.45 in care for patients.

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